NewsU.org

Technology Scope, Version One

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Poynter's Interactive Learning program needs to create two systems. The timeframe for each system is different, although the overall goal is to have all systems in place within the next 8 to 10 months. The two systems are:

NewsU: The Portal

NewsU.org will be the Web portal to journalism training resources and programs. It will have a database at its core—one that will include both static web resources (resources for trainers, self-teaching tools) and date-sensitive seminars, and be able to sort both by category, organization, geographic location, date, and more.

We also want to include a free-form search, and we want it to be as robust as possible. NewsU will succeed if it is an instantly useful resource. We think a powerful search will be the best way to help people find what they need, both on NewsU and in a sub-set of the Internet that would include training organization sites such as the American Press Institute, journalism organizations such as ASNE, universities that offer journalism training online, and Poynter's web site.

NewsU must have user registration, pooled with Poynter Online's, that will serve two purposes:

1. Users will be able to sign up for e-mail alerts for training that might want to take and, perhaps, see a customized NewsU home page.

2. Certain users will enter and modify information in the database—seminar data, for instance—via a simple web interface.

We'd like to know:

1. How does DataGlyphics imagine implementing this kind of database? To what degree could (or should) it be shared with Poynter Online?

2. What can DataG do in terms of searching? Have you implemented a robust search on any sites that we could look at? Can you integrate third-party tools? (Example: The Google search appliance.)

The timeframe for NewsU is this late fall or early winter 2003.

NewsU: The Tools

NewsU will also provide a flexible set of e-learning course management tools that Poynter and other organizations will use to create learning modules for journalists.

The best model we have for this right now is eCollege.com, which we showed you last summer. Poynter will be using eCollege as a full client starting this summer.

We know that DataG has built tools for an e-learning site called Red Vector. We need a matrix of all of the backend tools that DataG has built so we can see what already exists as we develop and refine the contents of Poynter's own e-learning toolbox.

We don't know exactly what functionality we'll want, but it will certainly include things like user registration (shared with the NewsU portal, see above, and Poynter Online), text display, online discussion, different modes of testing, and Flash content.

The entire system's functionality should be separated from its appearance; we want it to be 'skinnable' by other organizations, so that even though a course may reside on NewsU, it can carry the colors, fonts, and logos of, say, the Asian-American Journalists Association.

Finally, we'll want both the front- and back-end to work well on Mac and PC browsers.

We'd like to know:

1. What's the scale of this project? We don't want to recreate eCollege, but we do want to build a set of tools that are simultaneously flexible and easy-to-use. What kind of experience does DataG have to share with us?

2. What tools can we use from the Poynter Online development, both with and without modification?

3. Can we produce a truly cross-platform product for the user? For the course builder? The Poynter Online back-end works much better on the PC than on the Mac; what, if anything, can DataG do to improve on this arrangement for NewsU?

4. What else can we leverage from Poynter Online? From Red Vector?

The timeframe for NewsU tools is by this late winter or early spring 2004.

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